

# NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE SOUTHEAST REGION NEWS RELEASE

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## **NOAA FISHERIES SEEKS TEDS MODIFICATIONS**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is seeking public comment on a proposal to modify turtle excluder devices (TEDs) to better protect endangered sea turtles caught in shrimp nets, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced today. The modification, which would standardize TEDs throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, would affect shrimp fishermen in both state and federal waters.

"We need to reduce the mortalities of large, mature loggerhead, green, and leatherback sea turtles," said Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries' director. "TEDs have been very effective in reducing sea turtle mortalities in shrimp trawls, and this modification will improve effectiveness while not significantly affecting shrimp catch."

The proposed TED standardization, which includes an increase in size of the opening, will help larger sea turtles escape from trawls. The new proposal would amend regulations governing the types of TEDs allowed and certain other turtle protections. Proposed changes include:

- Requiring the use of either the recently approved double cover flap TED or a TED with opening of at least 71 inch straight-line stretched mesh measurement\*;
- Requiring all TEDs to have a minimum 32-inch by 32-inch grid size;
- Disallowing the use of the hooped hard TED, weedless TEDs, and Jones TEDs;
- Disallowing the use of accelerator funnels;
- Requiring bait shrimpers to use TEDs in states where a state issued bait shrimp license holder can also fish for food shrimp from the same vessel;
- Requiring tow time restrictions on trawl nets with headrope lengths of 12 feet or less.

(MORE)

Public hearings about this proposed rule will be held throughout the Southeast Region from November 1-8, 2001. The specific dates, times, and locations of those meetings will be announced in the Federal Register and will also be available on NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region's toll-free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. Written comments should be sent to: NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources, Attn; Don Knowles, SSMC3 Room 13821, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282. Comments about this proposal must be received by November 16, 2001.

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\*Specifications for these TEDs are posted on the Internet at:

<http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/fishery/pannounc.gen/protann.001/nr01-033.htm>

Printed copies of the specifications are available from NOAA Fisheries at the above address or by calling (301) 713-2332.